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ABSTRACT

Telecommunications opens a window to interaction with famous literary characters and to meaningful communication and a new worldwide audience for the budding author. Components of "kids2kids," a project in Orange County, California, designed to expand the audience of student authors, include: The Writing Lesson, Word Processing, and Telecommunications. Another project, KidConnections, focuses on interactive student writing exchanges emphasizing history and social science content. Students in Hanover County, Virginia, learned to use the conference system to process each other's poetry cooperatively and to communicate with literary characters played by student interns, graduate students, and professors. Training student teachers in telecommunications through programs like TeacherNet and TeacherLink insures that innovative educators will be present in the classroom to facilitate this new type of student link to literature. TeacherNet enabled students to send supervisors lesson ideas and plans prior to site visitations and to receive timely feedback from all project participants. The establishment of a support system among participants improved communication and encouraged ease of writing. TeacherLink allowed teachers to interact effectively with other teachers with similar interests around the world. Apple Talk ties faculty, staff, student microcomputers, and local schools through an Apple IIe electronic bulletin board. Beginning Teacher Computer Network helped beginning teachers help each other gain personal insights in areas of multicultural settings and languages other than English. (MG)

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(Telecommunications a Key Link to Literacy and Literature)

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Literature Comes Alive with KidLink Computer Conferencing

(Telecommunications a Key Link to Literacy and Literature:

Published authors inspire authors-in-training)Jean M. Casey, Ph.D.

California State University Long Beach

Telecommunications opens a new window to interaction with famous literary characters. Students in a California classroom communicate with a variety of literary characters on the telecommunications network. Student teachers, professors or master teachers play the character in literature, they fully prepare themselves by rereading the children's literature in preparation for electronic impersonation.

After a novel is read in class, students can actively communicate with key characters they have been reading about. Through this communication they develop a deeper understanding of character motivations and feelings. It also allows the students to feel a part of the literary work. Students also are able to take their favorite literary character and do a thorough enough reading about the character that they can be the impersonator and interact with peers or younger students. By bringing characters in literature to life, technology adds another dimension to a student's personal journey through literary classics. Because of the student's personal involvement this journey is one that will be remembered for a long time.

Training student teachers in telecommunications through programs like TeacherNet and TeacherLink insures that innovative educators will be in our classrooms to facilitate this new type of student link to literature.

Telecommunications opens a new window to meaningful communication and a new worldwide audience for the budding author. We learn to write by reading the written word of others; to tell our own stories by listening to the stories that others tell. Using telecommunications students can find an expanded audience for what they write and in turn be part of the expanded audience for their peers worldwide. Truly a tool for the global decade and a device that is culture blind; for the message from a friend is just that and not colored by skin, nationality or gender. Used appropriately telecommunications can be the next step in the road to literacy, word processing and the talking wordprocessor being the first step.

In Orange County California, an exciting project called kids2kids was designed by Newport-Mesa teachers wanting to use telecommunication to expand the audience of their student authors. The pilot project showed that the students tended to be more involved in what they wrote when they knew a real audience would read their work. Using FrEdMail as a host, projects and activities were tailored to specific California Achievement Proficiency areas. Lessons on the network are comprised of three components.

Component 1: The Writing Lesson provides each registered teacher with a CAP-aligned writing prompt complete with pre-writing suggestions and student writing

samples. The first activities in each lesson may be completed in class with whatever process the teacher is most comfortable using. Teachers may write the lesson with students as a whole class activity, assign the writing activity to a select group or groups, create cooperative writing teams or provide the task as an enrichment exercise.

Component 2: Word Processing supports the English/Language Arts Framework by providing a real purpose for the use of word processing. The registered teacher may use a number of options to complete this component. Due to the variety of site arrangements, teachers may use the school's computer lab for all students to word process the final draft or use a few computers moved to the classroom for rotation. Cooperative student teams may work together or parent volunteers may offer keyboard assistance. Documents supporting a variety of student word processors are now ready offering assistance in merging student files and saving in telecommunications format.

Component 3: Telecommunications enables young authors in any area of the state to send and receive files written by other network authors in a timely manner. With the assistance of the kids 2 kids project lead teachers, registered teachers can follow the CSUNET documentation to send or receive files with their matched classes.

Another exciting new project utilizing telecommunications is KidConnections, it focuses on interactive student writing exchanges emphasizing History and Social Science content. KidConnections is based on the philosophy that using the technology of telecomputing will provide students with learning experiences that could not be duplicated within the confines of their own classroom.

Telecomputing has been shown to offer the following educational benefits to students and teachers:

- *Students enjoy writing more when they are able to write for a distant audience of their peers.

- *Students are more careful about their spelling punctuations, grammar and vocabulary.

- * Communicating with schools from different geographical locations and different countries gives students an opportunity to understand different cultures.

- *Students become more aware of issues that are of global concern.

- *Students learn a communication skill that futurists believe will become a necessity for business and education, due to increasing transportation and building costs, by the year 2000.

- *Teachers are provided with the opportunity to exchange ideas and resources quickly and efficiently.

At Hanover school system in Hanover County Virginia students at a middle schools learned to use the conference system to process each other's poetry cooperatively. They posted their poetry creations as items on a poetry conference, then used item responses to provide constructive feedback on each other's writing, and to post poem revisions.

Students on the network also communicated with "Soup" (from the Robert Newton Peck books for children), "Miyax," an Eskimo protagonist from Jean George's Julie of

the Wolves. "Ralph", the mouse from The Mouse and the Motorcycle, and an everchanging variety of other literary characters. As classes read novels, students deepen their understanding of themes, motivations, and story development by actively communicating with the characters about whom they are reading. This interaction adds to the reality of the character and leads to a more comprehensive exploration of the novel. The protagonists are actually electronic roles played by student interns, graduate students, and professors who are often glad for an excuse to read or reread children's literature in preparation for electronic impersonation.

The following interchange illustrates how network interactions can bring characters to life.

"Dear Soup,

I am ten years old. My name is Ramey Watson. My birthday is February 7. I live in a big brown house. I have one brother and two sisters. I am writing to you because I would like to know more books that you were in and I would like to know more about you...

Dear Ramey Watson,

You were born on February 7th? That's neat, 'cause my buddy Rob was also born in February. My birthday's in May...The house I live in is a pretty good size. I've got my own room, but we all have to share the bathroom which really takes the fun out of things when you want to play with your boats in the tub for a while.

(The person responding as "Soup" is a student in the teacher education program.) "from "Bringing Characters to Life" by Pat Crook and Marshall Chase.

(Bull, Harris, Lloyd and Short, 1988)

TeacherNet Program for teachers-in-training

In order to produce teachers interested in exploring telecommunications projects

like those mentioned above, several universities nationwide have begun telecommunications programs for student teachers. California State University, Long Beach began a program called TeacherNet in Fall, 1989. Student teachers and master teachers, and university advisors were all loaned macintosh computers and modems to have at home. Using Microsoft Works software, a package that combines the use of a word processor, data base, spread sheet and communications programs, students were trained on the systems. This program enabled students to send supervisors lesson ideas and plans prior to site visitations and to receive timely feedback from all project participants. The student teachers formed a strong camaraderie through their frequent communication with one another. The telecommunications program opened up a world of resources to the student teachers that before had been difficult to access and with present university parking woes extremely frustrating. The Director of Educational Placement was on the network and able to provide current job placement information to all student teachers, counselors also were on the network to provide counseling for student teachers personal problems. Students evaluations at the end of the project highlighted several positive results of the study, the establishment of a support system among participants improved communication and encouraged ease of writing. Student teachers found they had more time to think and reflect on all aspects of teaching and then carry on detailed conversations with colleagues.

The Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia launched an electronic mail project known as Teacher-Link in 1984. Results of this original project showed

that teachers who might otherwise be isolated can interact effectively with other teachers with similar interests be they cross country or in Australia. After the university experience of having a computer in their home daily and using it for lesson planning, word processing and telecommunications, the Curry student teachers became the first generation of teachers trained to use an extended academic community as an instructional resource. (Bull, Harris, Lloyd & Short, 1988).

At the University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, the College of Education of Tomorrow began in 1988 to implement a phonenet-based AppleTalk network to tie together faculty, staff, and student microcomputers and also establish ties to local schools. Initially they ran an Apple IIe based electronic bulletin board in the College specifically for increasing the contact between the University and precollege schools and then tied into the "FrEdMail" network which consists of over seventy other electronic bulletin board systems located in schools and in district offices across the country.

In 1987, a network called Beginning Teacher Computer Network was established for graduates of the three teacher education programs at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Serving 38 beginning teachers the first year, Dr. Katherine Merseth found that beginners help each other gain personal insights in areas of multicultural settings and languages other than English. As the level of sharing was increased, beginning teachers were better able to gain perspective on their teaching through close communications with a network of other users. The network also fostered diverse and multiple views. This project illustrated that not only student teachers but beginning teachers profit from telecommunications access during pre and in-service

experience.

Telecommunications can help writers have a new meaningful audience. Teachers are needed who are knowledgeable about these new forms of technology and who can bring this knowledge to the elementary and secondary schools.

Finally teacher preparation needs to include telecommunications as a component of the process. Teachers trained with telecommunications then need continued support from university mentors and peers as new or beginning teachers through the network. These teachers thus trained with telecommunications expertise will then be able to facilitate a curriculum designed to help students with their information processing and global communication requirements in the new knowledge-based society.

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Software Used

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Network: ATL Network

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